

# COLUMBIAN CONSERVATORY OF — MUSIC

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# Columbian Conservatory of Music

THE SONG OF THE NEAPOLITAN HARP-BOY.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH—PETER ILJITCH TSCHAIKOWSKY (Tshä-ē-kôf'-shki).

Born at Votkinsk, Russia, May 7, 1840.  
Died at St. Petersburg, Russia, Oct. 25, 1893.



HE great Russian composer, Peter Iljitch Tschaikowsky, belongs among the greatest composers of modern times. His fame rests upon his eleven operas on Russian subjects; his 4th, 5th and 6th symphonies for full orchestra; a large number of songs, a magnificent concerto for piano and orchestra, and much other music.

Although one of the most original of modern composers, he had at first a taste for the tuneful melody of Italy, in which the harmonic support is as simple as possible. He wrote many beautiful arias and songs in such a style. But later on, in his larger works, he expresses that vein of pessimism and striving against an untoward fate, which in the nineteenth century held the vast population of Russia in bondage, poverty and stupid silence; there, free speech is not only prohibited, but enforced with banishment, even with death. This inward suffering of intelligent minds in Russia, finds expression in their novels, their music, and in their repeated attempts to throw off the yoke of bondage.

**THE POETIC IDEA**—In this truly Italian song of the Neapolitan Harp-Boy, Tschaikowsky had in mind one of those little Italian singers who goes about the streets, carrying on his shoulder a small harp, on which it is not possible to play in more than one key; very likely the young musician does not know even all that can be done upon the instrument. The singer selects a place, sitting upon a flight of steps, tunes his harp (for the harp is always getting out of tune) and then sings. Perhaps he sings a half a dozen songs in succession accompanied by the same two chords. This was what struck Tschaikowsky, and in this little piece, out of his Album of Easy Pieces for the Young, he brings the effect to us. Its charm lies entirely in its simplicity—its monotony. Very likely the singer improvised his words in part, and this is the reason why his phrases differ so much in length. See ms. 7, 8, 15, 16, 24, 25, etc.

**HOW TO STUDY**—In order to learn this piece easily, so as to play it well, begin by thoroughly learning the left hand part. This is much easier than would be supposed, as in the whole piece, except in the last three measures, the thumb and 2d finger of the left hand have but two chords. Each of these positions (chords) has two different bass notes, always alternated in a certain order. Each pair of chords is alternated in one certain order first, and in a different order afterwards.

First we have the chord of D, the two upper fingers playing F $\sharp$ -A; under this chord the 4th finger plays D, the real bass, or the 5th finger plays A an octave lower. This is the whole story of what happens to the chord of D. It is always D once, then F $\sharp$ -A twice, or A once and F $\sharp$ -A twice. Set to work and practice this until it will go itself.

Then we have to settle with the chord of A. Here the 1st finger plays A, and the 2d plays G under it; always G-A close together. Under this G-A, the 5th finger plays C $\sharp$  as bass, and then A as bass. Always in this order. First C $\sharp$  then A.

Under the beginning of measures 1, 5, 9, 13 and so on, every four measures you will find a small *a* or *b*. These mark the two bass patterns which are repeated over and over until you reach measure 42, where something a little different begins to happen. In measure 42 you have the D chord in a different position; and in measures 43, 44 you have the G chord, for the first and only times in this piece. Then in measures 45 you have the A chord again, but now with A twice in succession as bass.



THE FORM AND STRUCTURE—You can see very readily that inasmuch as the composer has chosen to write all the piece over two bass chords, it will be impossible for him to get very far from home, no matter how he works it, for he set out with the determination to be simple. He has three melodies, A, B, and C. C is practically B over again, except that from m. 43 on he changes it in order to get a better close. If you refer back to what is explained under the heading, "The Poetic Idea," you will see why he chose to keep the piece so very simple.



Revised, fingered and annotated  
by W. S. B. Mathews.

# ITALIAN SONG.

## THE SONG OF THE NEAPOLITAN HARP-BOY.

Tschikowsky.  
Album for the Young.

Vivo.

1 *p* 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
a) 4 1 2 5 1 2 4 1 2 b) *sempre staccato*

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16  
a) b)

B. *espr.* 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25  
*un poco piu f* a) b) a)

26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 *p*  
*mf* b) a)

C. 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41  
b) a)

42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49  
*mf* *poco riten.* *p*